

KIM IL SUNG'S LANGUAGE POLICY AS A VEHICLE OF *JUCHE*
AND A PERFORMANCE OF CULTURAL SUPERIORITY
OVER SOUTH KOREA

by

Michael Jeffrey Zwick

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Asian Studies

College of Humanities

The University of Utah

August 2016

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The University of Utah Graduate School

STATEMENT OF THESIS APPROVAL

The thesis of **Michael Jeffrey Zwick**
has been approved by the following supervisory committee members:

Debernieri Janet Torrey , Chair **04/28/2016**
Date Approved

Wesley Sasaki-Uemura , Member **04/28/2016**
Date Approved

Kirk Larsen , Member **04/28/2016**
Date Approved

and by **Janet M. Theiss** , Chair/Dean of
the Department/College/School of **Asian Studies**

and by David B. Kieda, Dean of The Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

Kim Il Sung's language purification policy, calling for the elimination of all loanwords, was born out of the *juche* (self-reliance) ideology. Promoting language purity was a way to unite the North Korean people in a feeling of cultural superiority over the traitors in the South whose relationship with the US, the North's enemy, showed no signs of weakening and whose relationship with Japan, the former colonizer, was being reestablished.

What might have been the nonlinguistic function of Kim Il Sung's language purification policy – calling for the elimination of all Chinese loanwords, which constitute approximately 50% of the Korean language? Could it have been a performance to promote nationalism, rather than a plan to purify the Korean language, and what might have been the significance of such a performance? In relation to this main line of inquiry, how are Kim's language policies similar to the language policies of other communist states, particularly the USSR and China? What was the significance of events in South Korea in the 1960s that might have influenced Kim to make these pronouncements on language policy? How are Kim's language policies holding up today?

I examine two speeches by Kim Il Sung in 1964 and 1966 that contain the extreme language policies. In the 1980s, Kim's successor, Kim Jong Il, approved the reinstatement of many loanwords that had been removed from the language under

the purification policy. The fact that Kim Il Sung's loyal son recognized the impracticality of applying his father's policies suggests that one aim of these policies, if not their exclusive goal, was something other than their actual application.

Kim Il Sung's focus on the purging of loanwords was a reflection of his desire for North Korea to prove its cultural purity and its cultural superiority over the South. I argue that the language policy speeches of the 1960s served as a platform for Kim Il Sung to carry the ideology of *juche* to his people and to unify them in the feeling that North Korea's language and culture was superior to, what he regarded as, the tarnished language and culture of South Korea.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express appreciation to Debernieri Torrey for her mentorship and support during this process. As the Chair of my thesis committee, Professor Torrey was completely dedicated from the beginning of my research to the final submission of my thesis. Her timely feedback on drafts through email and face-to-face meetings fostered a smooth and uninterrupted research and writing process. This thesis is what it is today largely because of critiques based on her extensive knowledge of Korean culture and history and her excellent writing skills

I am also grateful for the other two members of my committee, Wesley Sasaki-Uemura and Kirk Larsen, for their suggested revisions, which added critical historical context and an improved framework to this thesis. I am extremely thankful for their keen insight and their commitment to my successful completion of this thesis in the final months of this process.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not express my appreciation to Ross King, a prominent scholar on North Korea, for his research on North Korean language policy. At the beginning of this process in fall 2014, it was Professor King who so graciously offered me various articles through email correspondence. Through these texts, I was able to learn about North Korean language policy and began to ask my own questions related to the topic.

INTRODUCTION

Actions in North Korea are often reactions to events in the South of the peninsula. Every year, there is an escalation of threats from North Korea as the South Korean military commences its annual drills with the US military. Last March, the North reacted by shooting missiles into the sea, “probably to show its displeasure over war games being conducted by rival South Korea and the United States” (Gutierrez). The North’s firing of missiles into the sea is seen as a direct reaction to the purpose of the war games in the South: to prepare for possible combat with the North. The North’s use of arms as a reaction mirrors the provoking events and demonstrates its military strength. Language policy formation in North Korea also served to assert strength over the South, although not militarily. In this paper, I demonstrate how North Korean language policy was formed as a means by which Kim Il Sung could demonstrate to his people the North’s cultural superiority over the South.

Kim Il Sung’s language purification policy, calling for the elimination of all loanwords, was born out of the *juche* (self-reliance) ideology that he first established in 1955 to distance North Korea from the Soviet Union. By the beginning of the Sino-Soviet split in 1960, in the name of *juche*, Kim had also distanced North Korea from China and was establishing North Korea as a self-reliant, communist state. One of the first steps he took to establish *juche* was to purge the government of factions that stood between him and his full, unchallenged rule of North Korea. In a symbolically parallel

fashion, Kim insisted on purging all foreign loanwords in Korean, which characterized Kim Il Sung's language purification policy.

Kim Il Sung's purification policy, as I will explain, is an extreme endeavor that, if accomplished, would have resulted in a language with a lexicon of which at least half would have been different from the Korean used in South Korea. I argue that Kim's language purification policy was created as a vehicle to carry the ideology of *juche* to the people. Promoting language purity was a way to unite the North Korean people in a feeling of cultural superiority over the traitors in the South whose relationship with the US, the North's enemy, showed no signs of weakening and whose relationship with Japan, the former colonizer, was being reestablished.

North Korean language policy was first established in 1945 directly following the division of the peninsula. These first policies dealt with eradicating illiteracy and included a move to eliminate Chinese characters. This paper analyzes, more specifically, the language purification policy established in the 1960s by Kim Il Sung. This policy called for the elimination of loanwords in Korean and the replacement of such loanwords with pure Korean words.

Examination of the literature surrounding North Korean language policy reveals, unsurprisingly, that one of its goals was to control the hearts and minds of the North Korean people, thereby protecting the regime from a revolution. Akiyasu Kumatani explains that particular words that had the potential of inspiring public uprisings were removed from North Korean dictionaries (98).¹ New dictionaries did not print Chinese

¹ According to Werner Sasse, eleven dictionaries in sixteen volumes have been published in North Korea. "Publication of a Korean Encyclopedia has also started, but no

loanwords but, rather, the newly coined Korean words with the exception of “those adopted words which represent feudalism, ethical concepts, religious concepts, and old-fashioned customs” that were “eliminated . . . by strong social control forbidding the use of these adopted words” (Kumatani 98).² This move was clearly designed to control not only the language but also, in turn, the actions of the people.

The North’s emphasis on Korean language education and illiteracy eradication supports Kumatani’s notion of language policy as a form of thought control. Young-Hie Han describes the goal of the North Korean regime behind Korean language instruction as a means of providing “people with a better tool by which they may be urged to adhere to communist doctrine, oral and written and to maintain the downright loyalty and respect

¹ According to Werner Sasse, eleven dictionaries in sixteen volumes have been published in North Korea. “Publication of a Korean Encyclopedia has also started, but no more than two volumes out of a projected 30 have appeared to my knowledge” (69). Among these published “dictionaries” are encyclopedias, which were published for a variety of fields and “they carry an increasing number of newly coined words the later their publication date is” (69).

² Not only were many words discarded from the dictionary if they had a feudalistic meaning, but also definitions of certain words were omitted if they were considered invalid in “modern Korean [*Munhwa-ŏ*] [문화어 Cultured Language]” (Kumatani 105). For example, in the dictionary of 1960 – 1962, “the meaning of [*yŏkchŏk*] ‘a rebel’ is given as (1) a person who rebels against his country or people, (2) (in feudal society) the name given by a ruling class to ‘the person who is against a ruler’; whereas, the 1968 dictionary omitted the second meaning” (105). Another example of a word whose definition was customized to fit the goals of the regime is the word *chayujuŭi*. In English, this word means ‘liberalism’. The 1968 dictionary in North Korea defined the word as, “the tendency or attitude to hate organizations or regulations in social political life and to act according to one’s own will” (105). However, in a South Korean dictionary published in 1982, the word is defined as “an –ism meaning to recognize the dignity of individuals and to let them develop their own character of their own accord” (105). Kumatani’s research clearly shows the thought control aspect of Kim Il Sung’s language policy. It is also interesting that the definition changes in the examples above occurred with Chinese loanwords that were, apparently, not replaced by pure Korean words. This is evidence that not all Chinese loanwords were replaced, at least at this time, by pure Korean words.

for the people for the ruler” (216).

The literature provides convincing evidence to support the idea that North Korean language policy contains certain elements that were created out of a desire to control the thoughts and actions of the public. Hyun-Bok Lee’s research, which I will address later, even shows that the public’s speech was altered, at least for a time, as a result of the policy (72). However, I disagree that this notion explains the full goal of the impractical purification policy, which was the policy that Kim Il Sung most emphasized. The policy called for the removal of loanwords. This policy was unsustainable and, according to Jae Sun Lee, in the 1980s, 50% of the newly coined words were thrown out and by 1992, only 24% of the coined words remained in the dictionary (131).

Ross King posits,

Since the abortive new Korean orthography [more on this later] and the purge of Kim Tu Bong³ [circa 1958], language policy in North Korea has become an important part of the DPRK’s socialist revolution. North Korea has indeed worked systematically to mold the Korean language into a pure, nationalist weapon of communism. (140)

Although I agree with King’s statement that North Korean language policy was rooted in nationalism, I argue that its formation was also a reaction to events occurring in South Korea.

What might have been the nonlinguistic function of Kim Il Sung’s language purification policy – calling for the elimination of all Chinese loanwords, which constitute approximately 50% of the Korean language? Could it have been a performance and a tool to promote *juche* while establishing linguistic purity and cultural

³ Kim Tu Bong, a North Korean linguist, created six new letters for the Korean script in 1958 and disappeared soon thereafter.

superiority over South Korea, rather than a practical, long-term plan to purify the Korean language, and what might have been the significance of such a performance? In relation to this main line of inquiry, how are Kim Il Sung's language policies similar to the language policies of other communist states, particularly the USSR and China? What was the significance of events in South Korea in the 1960s that might have influenced Kim Il Sung to make these pronouncements on language policy? How are Kim Il Sung's language policies holding up today?

In order to address these questions, I will look closely at two speeches by "The Great Leader", the first leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereafter, DPRK). These two speeches, "The Talks with Linguists" by Kim Il Sung in 1964 and 1966, contain the extreme language policies for which there would be some attempt at implementation, at least until the death of Kim Il Sung in 1994. In these speeches, Kim Il Sung outlined the actions that should be taken to purify and develop the Korean language. The policy of purification was perhaps the most critical to Kim Il Sung. It is the policy that he seemed to stress most emphatically in his speeches and the policy upon which I base the majority of this paper.

Kim Il Sung's language policy, as proposed to linguists, calls for an overhaul of the language. Kim Il Sung's policy of language purification is particularly noteworthy as it calls for the elimination of loanwords, including Chinese loanwords, which make up roughly half of Korean language vocabulary. Kim Il Sung's premise was that purifying Korean from the contamination of Chinese, Japanese, English, and other loanwords was a necessary step in building the Communist state. In his speeches, Kim Il Sung argues that a Korean language free of loanwords was a pure Korean that could then develop

independent of outside influence.

Although North Korea translated Stalin's article "Marxism and Various Problems of Linguistics" (Ko 15), indicating an interest in Soviet language policies, an analysis of the Soviet Union's ideas of language in society reveals that Kim Il Sung's 1960s language policy was quite different from that of his communist neighbor. While the USSR and China's language policy seemed to focus primarily on establishing a unified writing system and a national language in order to unify the people and increase literacy, Kim was attempting to completely revamp the Korean language, and planned to do so at an unprecedented rate.

The implementation of Kim Il Sung's language purification policy in the 1960s paralleled a time in South Korea that has been referred to as the "decade of development" in the title of Yunshik Chang's book. Much of this development was a result of US aid to South Korea, which started in 1952 and continued for the next three decades. This aid symbolized not only the South's relationship with the US, but also its willingness to look beyond its borders for assistance.

In 1960, at the beginning of this "decade of development" in South Korea, President Rhee was removed from power. Given Rhee's anticommunist position and the fact that South Koreans overthrew him, the North Korean regime must have been feeling optimistic about the future. The North's optimism was short lived as the succeeding government in the South was overthrown in a military coup in 1961. North Korea, fearing that the US was behind the coup and that the new South Korean regime would pose greater threats, drastically increased its security (Kihl 48).

Following the military coup, Pak Chung-hee became the president and

emphasized, above all else, economic growth. At this time “the U.S. government began to implement a plan that called for greater interaction with the Republic of Korea on economic development” (“South Korea: From Aid”). Interaction between South Korea and Japan also increased with the normalization treaty of 1965.

In the midst of these events – increased interaction between the US and South Korea, and the South’s normalization of relations with Japan – Kim Il Sung presented his language purification policy. However, Kim Il Sung’s language policies later proved unsustainable, and his son and successor, Kim Jong Il, approved the reinstatement of many loanwords that had been removed from the language under the purification policy. The fact that Kim Il Sung’s loyal son and successor recognized the impracticality of applying his father’s policies suggests that one aim of these policies, if not their exclusive goal, was something other than their actual application. This raises questions regarding the nonlinguistic functions at play in his speeches.

This paper argues that Kim’s pronouncement of his outlandish language policy was built out of the *juche* ideology as a means of promoting nationalism within North Korea and as a performance to prove the nation’s cultural strength. Kim Il Sung’s focus on the purging of loanwords from Chinese, Japanese, and English was a reflection of his desire for North Korea to prove not only its cultural purity, but also its cultural superiority over the South. I argue that the language policy speeches of the 1960s served as a platform for Kim Il Sung to carry the ideology of *juche* to his people and to unify them in the feeling that North Korea’s language and culture was superior to, what he regarded as, the tarnished language and culture of South Korea.

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE KOREAN LANGUAGE ON THE PENINSULA

In order to grasp the significance of language policy in North Korea, it is essential to understand the situation of the Korean language prior to the division and formation of North and South Korea. Japan ruled the Korean peninsula from 1910 to 1945. The perception that the Japanese were out to destroy Korean culture and the Korean language during these 35 years is shared by Koreans on both sides of the peninsula and gave fuel to future language policies in North Korea.

From 1910 to 1920, Japan's assimilation efforts focused on Korean newspaper censorship and resulted in a newspaper blackout.⁴ Protests by Koreans in "The March First Movement" in 1919⁵ resulted in "Cultural Law," which allowed Korean newspapers

⁴ During 1910-1920, all privately owned newspapers were closed down (Robinson *Korea's Twentieth-century* 41). Only one Korean newspaper remained, *Daily News (Maeil Sinbo)*. Two specific laws controlled the content of this newspaper: "Korea's Newspaper Law" of 1907, and the "Publication Law" of 1909. Under these laws, the surviving papers were subject to prepublication censorship of articles that "defamed the imperial households of Korea and Japan," "jeopardized public peace," "disturbed morals", etc. The laws also required publishers to obtain a permits that could easily be suspended for a variety of reasons (Shin and Robinson 43).

⁵ The March First Movement in 1919 was characterized by protests against the colonial government and was the first recognized act of resistance against the Japanese government by Koreans. The changes that resulted from the movement were, initially, positive. Cultural Rule was the new law that produced these positive changes. Under Cultural Rule, "The press blackout was broken, as the GGK (Government General of Korea) relaxed its censorship standards and offered permits for vernacular newspapers and journals with political content" (Robinson *Korea's Twentieth-century* 50). Robinson stated, "The permission to publish Korean vernacular newspapers after 1920 stimulated a

to reemerge. Censorship began to build again and reached its peak in 1924 (Robinson *Cultural Nationalism* 151).⁶ Although the late 1920s saw the birth of Korean language broadcasting, “It was clear that the GGK decided to provide a Korean-language station in tandem with the move to intensify cultural assimilation in the colony after 1931” (Robinson “Broadcasting in Korea” 366). By 1938, the colonial government demanded exclusive use of Japanese in schools and government buildings.⁷ In 1941, all radio programs that dealt with the Korean language were banned. Korean language broadcasting ended altogether in 1944.

Japan’s assimilation efforts that focused solely on language seemed to be most emphasized in the final years of the occupation. By 1941, Korean language education was no longer permitted in schools (Rhee 91).⁸ Under Japanese occupation, Korean language usage in public⁹ was not only prohibited at two separate times but, toward the

Korean nationalist movement to create a unified grammar and orthography” (“Broadcasting in Korea” 368).

⁶ This period lasted until 1927 and came as a result of the Peace Preservation Law, which was enforced by the High Police. Robinson points out that the Koreans began to refer to newspapers as “brick wall newspapers” (*Korea’s Twentieth-century* 59). Often times, so many words were removed from articles and replaced with dashes by censors that the newspaper page began to resemble a brick wall.

⁷ The colonial government took steps to more fully assimilate Koreans to Japanese culture by restricting “the use of Korean language in school and government offices” while also making an effort to “rewrite Korean history and spread Japanese cultural values more generally” (Robinson “Broadcasting in Korea” 366).

⁸ “Class hours allocated for Japanese language classes were conspicuously more than for Korean. For example, in 1922, six [*sic*] graders would have two hours of Korean and nine hours of Japanese” (Rhee 91). In 1938, “The Korean class hours per week dropped from six to four hours in elementary schools, and in 1941, Korean language teaching at all school languages was abolished” (91).

⁹ Although it was not required to speak Japanese in the home, toward the end of

end of the Japanese colonization period, Koreans were also encouraged, though not legally required, to “Japanize” their names. In order to be successful in the Japanese governed Korea, Koreans needed Japanese names. Those who chose to keep their Korean names “could not enter schools, get jobs, or obtain ration cards” (Kang 117). Many Koreans made an effort to keep some aspect of their former name as part of their new Japanese name. For example, *Kim* ‘gold’, was converted into *Kanekuni* ‘gold country’, *Kanezawa* ‘gold pond’, *Kaneshiro* ‘gold castle’, or *Kaneda* ‘gold rice field’ (Kang 120).

This period inspired a sense of pride for the Korean language and a drive to protect it particularly amongst groups like the Korean Language Society (조선어학회) who worked tirelessly to develop and standardize Korean throughout the Japanese occupation.¹⁰ The Korean Language Society, a group that had originally formed in 1908, rose up and made concerted efforts to standardize the written language, *Han’gŭl*¹¹ (referred to as ‘*Chosŏn’gŭl*’ in North Korea). The Korean language society also “pushed forward with its plans for a massive monolingual dictionary until 1942, when the nearly completed manuscript was confiscated by the Japanese authorities. Many of the scholars were arrested and imprisoned, and two even died in prison” (King 112). Chin Kim states that these scholars were regarded to some extent as national heroes following Korea’s

the 1920s in Seoul, Japanese usage was not uncommon in the homes of the upper and middle classes (Song qtd. in Myers 29).

¹⁰ The aforementioned birth of Korean-language broadcasting in the 1920s “added an additional weapon to the movement to organize and standardize the Korean vernacular language” (“Broadcasting in Korea” 368).

¹¹ The Korean Language Society’s publication, the 1933 ‘*A Guide for the Unification of Korean Spelling*’ changed phonetic orthography to a morphological syllable division-based spelling system (Rhee 93)

independence from Japan (“Divergence in Language” 250).

The Korean language standardization movement was a form of nationalist resistance under the Japanese occupation (1910-1945) until the arrests of Korean linguists in 1942, and the language issue reemerged with liberation from Japan in 1945. However, soon after liberation, “with the creation of separate republics in 1948, the Korean language debate was doomed to develop in a divided land” (King 109). After the division of the peninsula in 1945, both North and South Korea started to focus on the language issue and began developing language policies independent of one another.

North Korea’s efforts focused on illiteracy eradication following the division of the peninsula (Kumatani 92). A major initiative to strengthen literacy at this time was eliminating Chinese characters from the Korean script. Chinese characters were kept only for scientific terms and names of places and people. As previously mentioned, the North professed that it had attained 100% illiteracy four years after independence from the Japanese.

Regardless of whether or not the North’s claim of having achieved complete illiteracy eradication was true, eliminating illiteracy would have been a top priority for Kim Il Sung given his communist ideals. “An illiterate person is outside politics and he has to be taught his ABC. Without this there can be no politics; without that there are rumours, gossip, fairy-tales and prejudices, but not politics” (Lenin). Increasing literacy and spreading the Great Leader’s policies went hand in hand.

However, eliminating Chinese characters and using solely *Chosŏn’gŭl* resulted in homonyms that had the potential of causing confusion. Different Chinese characters, containing different meanings, can have the same pronunciation. When written in the

Korean alphabet, two characters with the same pronunciation are written identically although their meanings are different. The North addressed this issue by initiating the purification movement, which coincided with Chinese character elimination by eliminating Chinese loanwords (Moon 35). Although a committee was formed in 1949 (Taylyukyenkwuso qtd. in Moon 35) to further this movement, Kumatani notes that no “concrete results” (96) were reported.

This period leading up to the Korean War was also characterized by projects related to Korean orthography and dictionary compilation. Neither of these movements seemed to result in a language gap with South Korea. Indeed, the entries in the newly published dictionaries in the North were not dissimilar to the entries in South Korean dictionaries of the same time period (Cha Cay-Un qtd. in Moon 38). Moon states this was the case because the “systematic language engineering in the *Munhwa*[-ō] [문화어 “cultured language”]¹² period (1964~present)” (38) had not yet begun.

The Korean War (1950-1953) temporarily halted language development plans in North Korea. Following the ceasefire, language policies that had the potential of resulting in a language gap between the North and South began to take shape. One such change in 1954 was that of a revised language prescription, *Chosŏnŏ ch’ŏljamŏp* (조선어 철자법 Korean Orthography), which was related to standardizing spelling, pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary to reflect the language of the proletariat.

This post-Korean War period in North Korea also saw the creation of more dictionaries. These new dictionaries included new words that were related to

¹² This is the name that North Korea has given to its Korean dialect.

communism. Semantic changes in words were also introduced. For example, the definition for “capitalist” became “the ringleader of the ruling class in a bourgeois society, the owner of capital exploiting and betraying workers’ labour and the enemy of democracy” (Concise Korean Dictionary qtd. in Moon 42).

After the Korean War, the purification movement was also reinstituted. The movement focused on the purification of difficult Sino-Korean and Japanese words, many of those being technical and academic words (Moon 44). Moon explains that the purification movement at this time was not approached systematically, as it came to be in 1964 (45). In other words, Kim Il Sung was not solely directing the purification efforts; the linguists had held responsibility and initiated much of the vocabulary reform.

These dictionary changes and purification efforts are signs that Kim Il Sung was moving toward *juche*, an ideology that the Great Leader first introduced in 1955 in his speech “Eliminating Dogmatism and Formalism and Establishing Juche in Ideological Work.” Victor Cha states the four tenets of *juche*: “(1) man is the master of his fate; (2) the master of the Revolution is the people; (3) the Revolution must be pursued in a self-reliant manner; (4) the key to Revolution is loyalty to the supreme leader, or *Suryŏng*, Kim Il Sung” (37). In North Korean rhetoric, the last two points seem to be those that were most emphasized.

Loyalty to the leader was, and still is, the most important of the four elements of *juche*. Cha explains,

Juche’s writings taught that the Great Leader (*Suryŏng*) Kim Il-sung was the brain, the party was the nerves, and the people were the arms, legs, muscle and bone of the state. Two messages of obedience emerged: (1) without the brain, the rest does not function; therefore, there must be complete loyalty; and (2) independent thinking was not needed, since this was handled by the brain. The only critical thinking that was allowed was

self-criticism based on guilt for not serving the leader well. (43)

Not only was independent thinking not needed, it was not tolerated if it was contrary to the ideas of the “brain”, Kim Il Sung.

His first speech on *juche* in 1955 was given as a reaction to the recent animosity that Kim Il Sung had developed for the Soviet Union.¹³ Implementation of the *juche* ideology would allow North Korea to maintain a distance from the Soviet Union. Implementing the ideas of *juche* would also prove effective in distancing North Korea from China.¹⁴ Following the Sino-Soviet split in 1960, adherence to *juche* principles allowed North Korea to take a neutral stance while still managing to maintain somewhat positive relations with both sides.¹⁵

¹³ In the 1950s the Soviet Union refused to provide North Korea with assistance, which was seen as betrayal by the DPRK (Puzanof April 1957 and Puzanof May 1957 qtd. in Suh 2013, p. 70). Khrushchev’s rise to power also negatively affected North Korea-Soviet relations. The Soviet Union made efforts to interfere with North Korea’s domestic affairs. These events influenced the North to do things “our way” (Suh 70), a main principle of the *juche* ideology.

¹⁴ Armstrong explains how the DPRK distanced itself from China in 1960 through criticism of China’s ideology of “dependence.” “The KWP [Workers’ Party of Korea] Central Committee in October 1960 criticized obsequious attitudes toward foreign countries and mindless imitation of things foreign, a practice it labeled *sadaejuii*, or ‘flunkeyism,’ as the term was officially translated in later North Korean texts. . . Both pro-Soviet and pro-Chinese behavior was condemned as ‘flunkeyism,’ but for Korean and Chinese readers, it was obvious that *sadaejuii* referred to Korea’s traditional reverence for China and Chinese culture – the term *sadae* or ‘serving the great’ originated with the ancient Chinese philosopher Mencius, and in traditional Korea referred to Korea’s subordinate relationship to China. *Sadaejuii* was, in fact, the antithesis of Juche, dependence rather than self-reliance. The use of this term implied that Juche would not be directed only against the Soviet Union, which was the primary target of Kim’s original 1955 Juche speech, but against any dependence on or imitation of China as well” (122).

¹⁵ As Armstrong discusses, in July 1961, the DPRK successfully signed treaties with both the USSR and China. “On July 6, 1961, the DPRK signed a Treaty of

Within North Korea, Kim Il Sung's commitment to *juche* and its principles resulted in the elimination of those who posed a threat to Kim's goal of being the "brain" of the state. Perhaps the most notable were the purges of particular groups both within and without the government. One such purge occurred in August 1956 when a group sought to replace Kim Il Sung. The rebels accused Kim Il Sung of adhering to "outdated Stalinist methods" (91). Despite these accusations, Kim Il Sung was sustained through a majority vote. Kim Il Sung then purged the rebels from the government.

Although Kim Il Sung said he would reinstate the rebel group after China and the USSR demanded that he do so, he did not keep his word. Instead, Kim continued his purges until all of the regime's opposition groups had been expelled. Kim Il Sung attained an unchallenged position in which he was able to "replace the Soviet-sponsored 'dependent Stalinism' of 1945-1956 with his own brand of 'national (or, if one prefers *chuch'e*) Stalinism'" (Lankov 91). The Great Leader was taking full advantage of his authority as the "brain."

Kim Il Sung did not stop after he had purged rebels in the government. He also understood the threat of education to his *juche* ideology. Lankov describes the purges of "seeds of dissent" (96) at Kim Il Sung University as "particularly thorough" (96).

The establishment of the *juche* ideology in North Korea was characterized by purges. In order to establish this new order, Kim Il Sung removed anything and everything that threatened the full implementation of *juche*. This purging, or as Kim Il Sung calls it "purification", was also a key element of North Korea's language policy in

Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance with the USSR in Moscow, and then, five days later, signed an almost identical treaty with China in Beijing" (Chung 1978 qtd. in Armstrong 2013, 124). "These two alliance treaties reflected North Korea's masterful manipulation of Beijing and Moscow rather than trilateral cooperation" (124).

the 1960s.

During the 1960s, Kim Il Sung suddenly became much more concerned with language issues. In 1964 and 1966, Kim Il Sung officially outlined his language purification plan for the communist state, through two speeches given to North Korean linguists. This paper will shed more light on why Kim Il Sung chose this time in history to emphasize the elimination of loanwords over the other aspects of North Korean language policy (i.e., the eradication of illiteracy, the elimination of Chinese characters in publications, and the publishing of new dictionaries).

KIM IL SUNG'S LANGUAGE POLICY AND THE GOAL OF PURIFICATION

Kim Il Sung's *Talks with Linguists*, as they were titled, occurred twice: first in 1964 and again in 1966. North Korea's language policy has stemmed mostly from these two "talks." In these speeches, Kim Il Sung outlined the actions that he wished to take in order to purify and develop the Korean language. I will explore the policies through the context of these two speeches.

On January 3, 1964, Kim Il Sung gave his first speech on language policy titled, "Some Problems Related to the Development of the Korean Language." In this first speech, Kim Il Sung spends time introducing what he perceives as problematic issues with the Korean language. He addresses letter reform and states, "our letters do have certain shortcomings... Our syllabics are square... Reforming them would also have advantages: it would make them easier to read and would enable us to type quickly and facilitate the technicalization of letters" (Kim "Some Problems" 4).¹⁶ However, he makes it clear that letter reform should not take place before reunification. He also briefly mentions an issue he sees with word spacing, or the lack thereof. "Words ought to be spaced. In our writing now each word does not have a fixed form. Therefore our writing looks like an unbroken string of syllabics. So, at a glance, it is less appealing to the eye

¹⁶ "우리의 글에 일정한 결함이 있으니만큼... 고치면 좋은 점도 있습니다. 보기도 쉽고 타자도 문자의 기술화도 빨리 할수 있습니다" (Kim "Chosŏnŏrŭl palchŏnsik'iki" 249).

than Chinese or European writing” (Kim “Some Problems” 10).¹⁷ However, neither of these issues seems to be the focus of his 1964 speech.

Most of Kim Il Sung’s 1964 speech is spent on, what he labels, the “most important question which calls for our attention” (Kim “Some Problems” 5). Kim is referring to the issue of Chinese loanwords “which have flooded our language” (5).¹⁸ He ends with a brief discussion on reforming the way Korean is taught in schools.

The purpose of the 1964 speech seems to be two fold: to introduce the problems with the Korean language and to inspire a sense of pride in the language. He meets the second goal by praising the Korean language. “We should be justly proud of our spoken and written language and should love it” (Kim “Some Problems” 5).¹⁹ However, he continues by admitting that the language is not perfect and actions should be taken to improve it further.

On May 14, 1966, Kim Il Sung gave his second speech titled “On Correctly Preserving the National Characteristics of the Korean Language.” In this speech, Kim Il Sung continues to focus on the elimination of Chinese words and loanwords altogether. He also briefly mentions a call to replace Chinese place names with pure Korean names. The issue of letter remodeling is briefly touched upon but, again, Kim Il Sung states that

¹⁷ “단어는 띄어써야 합니다. 지금 우리 나라 글에서는 단어들이 하나하나 고정된 형태를 이루지 못하고있습니다. 그러니 글자들을 죽 늘어놓은것 같아서 한문이나 구라파나라들의 글보다 얼핏 보아서는 눈에 잘 들어오지 않습니다” (Kim “Chosŏnrŭl palchŏnsik’iki” 252).

¹⁸ “가장 중요한 문제는 우리 말에 많이 섞여있는 한자어에 관한 문제입니다” (Kim “Chosŏnrŭl palchŏnsik’iki” 250).

¹⁹ “우리는 자기의 말과 글을 응당 자랑해야 하며 사랑하여야 합니다” (Kim “Chosŏnrŭl palchŏnsik’iki” 250).

this is an issue to be addressed fully only after reunification. The word spacing issue also reemerges. Kim suggests that the future improvement of word spacing will facilitate reading (“On Correctly Preserving” 296). As is the case with the 1964 speech, Kim’s 1966 speech gives less attention to the issues of letter remodeling and word spacing than to the language purification policy.

In this second speech to linguists, Kim Il Sung lays out plans on how to purify the language of loanwords. He discusses the number of words that should be replaced by pure Korean words and how to integrate them into society. Newspapers, dictionaries, textbooks, and new teaching methods would all play a role in popularizing the new and pure Korean words, which would carry the same meaning as the former Sino-Korean word. Kim Il Sung also states that children should correct the incorrect speech of adults since the words will be taught to pupils in primary school.

As I address certain aspects of these speeches, it is important to keep in mind that Kim Il Sung was respected not only because he was the leader of North Korea but also because of his purported involvement as an activist during the Japanese occupation. As AnnMarie Saunders states, “Kim Il Sung’s [purported] participation in this guerrilla warfare and resistance to the Japanese form the foundation of his legitimacy as leader of the DPRK” (2). Kim Il Sung was viewed by North Koreans as an active resister to the colonizers’ efforts to assimilate Koreans to Japanese ways.²⁰

As mentioned previously, the main issue that Kim Il Sung addressed in his *Talks*

²⁰ Interestingly, Kim was actually outside of the country for a large part of the occupation period, a fact he likely did not publicize. Given this reality, it is quite ironic that he is the one addressing issues of language purity, and apparently, viewed as qualified to do so.

with Linguists is that of loanwords. The existence of Chinese, Japanese, and Russian loanwords in the Korean language was a matter of great concern for Kim Il Sung. He spoke negatively about the effect of these words on the Korean language stating that they have “adulterated” the language. He was adamant in emphasizing that the use of loanwords would ultimately result in the destruction of the Korean language.

Chinese Loanwords as an Obstacle to Purification

Kim Il Sung focused primarily on Chinese loanwords, as those were, and still are, the most prevalent element in the Korean language. One of the first actions taken to purify the Korean language occurred even before Kim Il Sung’s speeches. The removal of Chinese characters from textbooks began directly after liberation from Japan and works using only Korean letters began to be published (Kumatani 92).

The North became obsessed with purifying Korean of Chinese loanwords after Kim Il Sung’s speeches on language policy. This complete reformation of the vocabulary system resulted in a noticeable language gap between the two countries, which was met with shock by South Korean scholars during South – North talks (1971, 1972) (Kumatani 97). At the talks between the North and South, the South noticed a significant language barrier between the two sides. Hyun-Bok Lee describes the situation.

Some words and expressions were totally unintelligible and some apparently familiar words were found to have entirely different semantic connotations. At first, South Koreans assumed that such differences might be purely dialectal, but they realized before long that the language differences between South and North Korea were much more than dialectal...dialectal differences in Korea have never been so great as to affect mutual understanding between speakers of different dialectal background. (72)

This quote is evidence that the purification policy was in full swing, at least until this

point in history and at least among the government elites, a few years after it was established.

To strengthen his resolve to rid the language of loanwords, Kim Il Sung cited South Korea's language situation and claimed that the situation in the south was dire. He referred to the South's Korean as a "polyglot language" ("On Correctly Preserving" 283) and described it as "a debasement of Korean with English, Japanese and words of Chinese origin" ("On Correctly Preserving" 283).²¹ "In fact, the situation is such that if the words of Chinese, Japanese and English origin were eliminated from the language used in South Korea, there would be nothing left of our own language except [such particles as] *-ul* and *-rul*" ("On Correctly Preserving" 284).²² It is true that Chinese characters still abounded in formal publications in the South at this time while they were nearly nonexistent in the North. However, when taking into account all South Korean publications of this time, this statement by Kim was a clear exaggeration of the general state of the language in the South, an accurate depiction of which was secondary to the goal of rallying the linguists around the purification policy.

In regard to loanwords, Kim Il Sung leaves no room for considering what may be their rightful place in the Korean language. At no point does Kim Il Sung admit that the acquisition of loanwords is a natural phenomenon that has occurred in every language in the world. It seems he would definitely disagree with Chin Kim, who said, "neither

²¹ "조선말에 영어외 일본말과 한자말이 뒤섞인 범벅이말도 들어오고" (Kim "Chosŏnŏi minjokchŏk" 256).

²² "사실 남조선에서 쓰고있는 말에서 한자말과 일본말, 영어를 빼버리면 우리 말은 <<을>>, <<를>>과 같은 토만 남는 형편입니다" (Kim "Chosŏnŏi minjokchŏk" 256).

Chinese characters nor Sino-Korean vocabulary is the Chinese language. This is to say that they are *loanwords*, not *foreign* words” (“Underlying Causes” 973). Kim goes on to say “It is no less patriotic or moral to adopt loanwords than to import science and technology from abroad. In what sense is it desirable to borrow science and technology but undesirable to borrow scientific and technical terminology accompanying them?” (“Underlying Causes” 973). Kim’s point suggests that Kim Il Sung’s resistance to loanwords, at least from a descriptive linguistic standpoint, is nonsensical and provides further evidence that his purification policy had a nonlinguistic function.

Kim Il Sung refused to acknowledge the natural phenomenon of loanwords. He held to his opinion that words from outside of Korea had no place in the North. Because he believed the use of loanwords was unpatriotic, he rallied the linguists by connecting nationalism and ownership to language. He goes so far as to say, “We should teach everyone to think that those who use Chinese ideographic words and borrowed words are devoid of national pride, and those who speak their own language well are learned men with a high national pride” (“On Correctly Preserving” 292).²³ According to Kim Il Sung, in order to be considered patriotic, one must be able to use the Korean language exclusively.²⁴

He states that if you are a Korean with a national conscience, you will not be

²³ “우리는 모든 사람들이 한자말이나 외래어를 쓰는 사람은 민족적공지가 없는 사람이고 자기 나라 말을 잘하는 사람이 유식하고 민족적자부심이 높은 사람이라고 생각하도록 하여야 합니다” (Kim “Chosŏnŏŭi minjokchŏk” 261).

²⁴ Considering the fact that Chinese language skills had previously been a sign of civility in Korea, this negative stance toward the Chinese language is particularly surprising.

happy to see the language die away. On this point, he frequently criticizes Japan and South Korea. He states, “Language is a major indication of national character” (Kim “On Correctly Preserving” 284).²⁵ Kim Il Sung makes the point that since the Japanese use American words in science, their science is not their own (“On Correctly Preserving” 284). He references his conversation with a representative of the Japan Communist Party,

In Japan, he said, science is making progress, but it can hardly be boasted of as Japan’s own; it is characteristically American. And science itself is capitalized on as a moneymaking means by businessmen. In other words, he said, today’s Japanese science is not true science. So the Japanese entirely copy American ways in the development of science, with the result that English terms flood in to adulterate Japanese, I was told. (“On Correctly Preserving” 284)²⁶

In this way, Kim Il Sung attempts to belittle Japan by connecting language with ownership. In other words, even though Japan seemed technologically superior to North Korea, it was not really superior. Since its technology had English names, its technology was America’s rather than its own.

Replacing Chinese Loanwords to Meet the Goal of Purification

To embark on the path to purification, Kim Il Sung proposed, “Technical terms and the like should also be printed in newspapers two or three times a week; some 15

²⁵ “언어는 민족의 중요한 징표의 하나인데...” (Kim “Chosŏnŏŭi minjokchŏk” 256).

²⁶ “그의 말에 의하면 일본에서는 과학이 발전하고 있기는 하나 자기 민족의 것은 거의 없고 미국화되고 있으며 과학자체가 장사군들의 돈벌이에 이용되고있다고 합니다. 말하자면 오늘의 일본 과학은 참다운 과학이 못 된다는 것입니다. 일본사람들이 과학발전에서 이렇게 미국본만 따다보니 영어가 많이 들어와서 섞이고 일본말이 영어화되고 있다고 합니다” (Kim “Chosŏnŏŭi minjokchŏk” 256).

newly proposed words at a time should be carried in the papers, so that the masses can write critical essays and submit questions about them” (“On Correctly Preserving” 289).²⁷ According to this quote, Kim Il Sung planned to introduce 30-45 new words per week and seemed to think that this was a reasonable rate of change. He followed up his proposal by saying, “If the words handed down over scores of hundreds of years are changed overnight, people will not accept them. Moreover, those who changed them will scarcely remember all of them and so will be unable to use them all” (“On Correctly Preserving” 289).²⁸ Kim Il Sung seems to contradict himself here. Previous to this statement, Kim Il Sung had mentioned that some Chinese words would stay in the language if they have been in the language long enough. However, here he suggests that the words to be changed include the ones that are very old. Kim Il Sung proposed the replacement of thousands upon thousands of words (“On Correctly Preserving” 290). Not only did he want to replace old Chinese words, but he also wanted commonly used Chinese words to be replaced. In fact, his plan was to start by replacing those Chinese words that are most commonly used. He states that a dictionary should be compiled to popularize the most common 7 – 8,000 of these newly coined pure Korean words (“On Correctly Preserving” 290).

Yon-sook Hong (qtd. in Kim “Divergence in Language” 253) gives the following

²⁷ “학술용어 같은것도 신문에 한주일에 두세번쯤 내야 하며 다듬을 말을 한번에 열댓개씩 신문에 내여 대중이 평론도 쓰게 하고 질문도 내게 하여야 합니다” (Kim “Chosŏnŏŭi minjokchŏk” 259).

²⁸ “몇십몇백년동안 내려온 말을 하루아침에 다 고친다면 사람들이 받아들이지 않을것은 물론, 고친 사람들 자신도 모두 기억하지 못하여 다 쓰지 못할것입니다” (Kim “Chosŏnŏŭi minjokchŏk” 259-260).

examples of coined words in North Korea.

<u>Original word and meaning</u>	<u>Coined word and meaning</u>
[P'ama] 'perma'	[pokkŭm mŏri] 'toasted hair'
[myŏlkyun] 'sterilization'	[kyun kkangkŭri chukiki] 'utter extermination of germs'
[hellik'opt'ŏ] 'helicopter'	[chiksŭng pihaengi] ²⁹ 'vertically ascending aircraft'

As the examples show, combining basic, pure Korean words is the method used to replace Chinese words with pure Korean words. The newly created words may be simpler but are formed by combining basic words making them longer and less efficient. Kim ("Divergence in Language") states that changing words this way "is like asking English speakers to use such coined phrases as *under-sea boat* instead of *sub-marine*, *long-distance-speaker* instead of *telephone*, etc." (249). It is absurd to believe that the public would alter their language in a way that is less efficient when languages naturally develop in a way that makes them more efficient. However, I would argue that the effectiveness of the policy's implementation was less important than the aim of promoting nationalism amongst the people by uniting them through the idea of linguistic purity and cultural superiority over the South.

In his other speech to the North Korean linguists on January 3, 1964, Kim Il Sung stated, "Beginning just after liberation, we have maintained that easy – not difficult – words should be used; nevertheless, there are still many people who use words that are

²⁹ Ironically, this coined word is composed entirely of Chinese roots.

over the heads of the masses (“Some Problems” 12).³⁰ Calling for the use of easy, not difficult, words after liberation coincides with Kim Il Sung’s focus on eliminating illiteracy that dominated early language policy in the DPRK. Moreover, higher level vocabulary in Korean tends to include more Chinese words than lower level or easy words. Therefore, continuing to emphasize the use of easy words over difficult words, while it may continue to further the literacy effort, was also another way of instructing the public to not use Chinese words.

Kim Il Sung again sealed the argument for his language policies with the idea of nationalism. He asserts that using Chinese words does not show that somebody is learned, but does show a lack of national pride (Kim “On Correctly Preserving” 292). He continues to condemn those who use Chinese loanwords as a means of flaunting their education or ability to use high-level vocabulary. Kim makes the point that it is the nobler man who speaks and writes in a manner that is comprehensible to all people (Kim “Some Problems” 12).

It is quite clear that Kim Il Sung’s main policy was to replace Chinese loanwords with pure Korean words. “When our native word and a word borrowed from Chinese ideographs mean one and the same thing, we must adopt the former and discard the latter, removing it from the dictionary” (“On Correctly Preserving” 285).³¹ One would assume

³⁰ “우리는 해방직후부터 힘든 말을 쓰지 말고 쉬운 말을 쓸것을 주장하여왔으나 아직도 대중이 알아듣지 못할 어려운 말을 쓰는 사람들이 많습니다” (Kim “Chosŏnŏrŭl palchŏnsik’iki” 253).

³¹ “고유어와 한자말이 뜻이 꼭같을 때에는 고유어를 쓰고 한자말을 쓰지 말도록 하며 사전에서도 그런 한자말을 빼야 합니다” (Kim “Chosŏnŏŭi minjokchŏk” 257).

that a removal of Chinese words from dictionaries would reflect Kim Il Sung's belief that Chinese words had no place in society. However, this was not the case. Kim continued to require students to learn Hanja in school.

Kim Il Sung knew the importance and the prevalence of Chinese loanwords in the South. In order to understand South Korean newspapers and other publications, it was essential to understand Chinese characters. Thus, in spite of the goals of eliminating Chinese, starting in 1968, North Korea set the number of Chinese characters that students should learn from middle school to university (S.K.C. qtd. in Kumatani 93). The North's goal was for students to learn a total of 3,000 characters by the time they graduated from college. Insup Taylor and Martin Taylor break down this goal in terms of how many Chinese characters are learned during each period of schooling. According to their research, the breakdown is "1,500 characters in the six years of secondary school...500 additional Han[j]a in two years of technical school; and 1,000 additional Han[j]a in four years of university" (241).

The establishment of these learning goals does not mean that the North was allowing Chinese characters to be printed in their publications, aside from in the Chinese character (Hanja) textbooks themselves. Rather, these education goals would provide North Korean students with the necessary skills to understand the texts in the South. In fact, Kim Il Sung's goal was to destroy all non-Hanja textbooks containing Chinese characters. He said, "If textbooks include them, they will look like south Korean ones" ("On Correctly Preserving" 294).³² This statement shows that Kim Il Sung's elimination

³² “교과서들에 한자를 넣으면 남조선모양으로 됩니다” (Kim “Chosŏnŏi

of textbooks with Chinese characters was rooted in a desire to differentiate the North from the South in addition to the expressed goal of ridding the land of Hanja.

Jae Jung Song claims that North Korean students actually learn more Chinese characters in their schooling years than students in South Korea. However, since Chinese characters are not found in printed materials in the North, South Koreans may be more proficient in them than their North Korean counterparts (144). Again, Kim Il Sung's emphasis on learning Hanja seems to contradict the perceived hatred for Chinese words and suggests that his purification policy was not, in fact, linguistically based.

In his 1966 speech, Kim Il Sung also called for places or villages with Chinese names to be replaced with pure Korean names. "It sounds more tasteful to do so than to call them by Chinese ideographs pronounced in Korean fashion" ("On Correctly Preserving" 285).³³ It is clear from looking at a current map of North Korea that these changes did not occur. Major cities and provinces in North Korea maintain their original Sino-Korean names. A prominent example of a city that has maintained its Sino-Korean name is the capital city, "P'yŏngyang" (평양),³⁴ while, perhaps ironically, South Korea's capital, Seoul, did discard its original Sino-Korean name, "Hanch'ŏng" (한성).

minjokchŏk" 262).

³³ "우리 말로 부르는것이 한자말로 부르는것보다 더 고상합니다" (Kim "Chosŏnŏi minjokchŏk" 257).

³⁴ On the topic of naming policies, recent news from North Korea proves that naming policies are still being developed and adhered to. The North has declared that nobody is permitted to have the name Kim Jong Un. This tradition has been in place since Kim Il Sung, the first leader of North Korea. Kim Jong Il was also a proponent of this policy. If somebody already has the name Kim Jong Un and has had it since birth, a name change is required. The *New York Times* article stated, "It is unclear how many people had to change their names to comply with the new rules, but in South Korea, Jong-un is a common name for both men and women" (Cho).

OTHER COMMUNIST COUNTRIES' LANGUAGE POLICIES

Kim Il Sung's speeches on language policy allude to the idea that language policies and communism run hand in hand. In his words, "A true patriot is a communist. Only communists truly love their mother tongue and endeavor to develop it" ("On Correctly Preserving" 284).³⁵ This statement by Kim Il Sung raises the question, how, if at all, are Kim's language policies similar to the language policies of other communist states, particularly the USSR and China?

It has been speculated that North Korean language policy was influenced by Soviet language policy. According to one scholar, the North "even translated Stalin's 'Marxism and Various Problems of Linguistics'" (Ko 15). However, a comparison of Kim Il Sung's speeches to North Korean linguists and Joseph Stalin's article on language in society only furthers the notion that Kim Il Sung was in a league of his own in terms of his language purification policy.

Joseph Stalin, in reference to the changes in the Russian language over "this long span of time" said "The Russian vocabulary has in this period been greatly replenished; a large number of obsolete words have dropped out of the vocabulary; the meaning of a great many words has changed, the grammatical system has improved" (7-8). This idea

³⁵ "참다운 애국자는 공산주의자입니다. 오직 공산주의자들만이 자기 나라 말을 참으로 사랑하고 발전시키기 위하여 힘쓰는것입니다" (Kim "Chosŏnŏi minjokchŏk" 256).

of language replenishment relates to Kim Il Sung's policy of language purification. The difference, it seems, is that vocabulary changes in Russian occurred when words were "obsolete." This approach is more passive and natural than that used in the DPRK. Kim Il Sung's approach was active and unnatural as it called for an unconditional forced replacement of Chinese words. Kim's plan was, essentially, to force the formation of a new language. Chinese loanwords account for about half of the Korean language and his goal was to replace them by publishing vocabulary lists of 15 newly coined words 2-3 times per week in North Korean newspapers.

China's language policies dealt with three main goals, none of which relate to Kim Il Sung's language purification policy, although there are parallels with other aspects of North Korean language policy. According to Defu Wan, these include "selecting a national language, reforming its writing system (simplification, standardization and Romanization), and promoting it in the educational system. Script reform was used as a way to facilitate promotion of the national language and mass literacy" (66). The Chinese policy of selecting a national language is similar to Kim Il Sung's goal of strengthening nationalism, which is prevalent in his speeches. China's promotion of the language in the education system is also seen in North Korea, as evidenced in Kim Il Sung's textbook reform efforts. For the Chinese, the goal to eliminate illiteracy was also highly emphasized, as it was in North Korea.

China believed that literacy and power ran hand in hand. Indeed, the most powerful armies in the world, those of Europe and that of Japan, had literate soldiers. "Dr. Arthur H. Smith (qtd. in De Francis, 1950, 45) argued, 'the leaders of the New China had learned that one chief element in the amazing efficiency of the Japanese

soldier lies in the fact that he can read” (qtd. in Wan 74). Yet, China had an illiteracy rate of 90%.

Latinization was another policy that came about in China in the 1930s under Mao Zedong.³⁶ The latinization policy was formed out of a desire to improve literacy throughout China. In 1936, Mao declared,

we believe latinization is a good instrument with which to overcome illiteracy. Chinese characters are so difficult to learn that even the best system of rudimentary characters, or simplified teaching, does not equip the people with a really efficient and rich vocabulary. Sooner or later, we believe, we will have to abandon characters altogether if we are to create a new social culture in which the masses fully participate. (De Francis qtd. in Wan 76)

In Mao’s China, latinization also allowed for uniform pronunciation within the regional dialects of Chinese, which fostered a certain sense of nationalism within the country and regions. Mao created policies that unified the populace, either through latinization efforts or a push for the establishment of a single language. The desire to inspire nationalism through language policy is reflected in North Korean language policy as well. And as a policy built on the backbone of the *juche* ideology, which calls for self-reliance in all areas, North Korea’s language policy also could have the effect of unifying the people. But it is Kim’s purification policy that sets the DPRK’s language policy apart from that of its communist neighbors. This policy, if successful, would essentially result in an entirely new language in approximately 200 years.³⁷ It is important to consider

³⁶ Indeed, the Korean people would not have benefitted from latinization like the Chinese since the Korean script was already phonetic.

³⁷ Kim Il Sung’s plan to replace 15 Chinese words 2-3 times a week with newly coined Korean words would result in 1,560-2,340 words a year. If there are 500,000

events that were occurring in the region at the time to more fully understand why Kim Il Sung pursued this language purification endeavor at this particular time in history.

words in the Korean language and half of those are Chinese words, it would take approximately 160-213 years to replace all of the Chinese loanwords.

EVENTS IN SOUTH KOREA THAT PROMPTED KIM IL SUNG'S LANGUAGE POLICY FORMATION

The Sino-Soviet split that began in 1960 had the effect of further strengthening Kim Il Sung's move toward *juche*. The trilateral axis of communism between China, the USSR, and North Korea was rapidly diminishing and North Korea had the choice to side with the Soviets, who had given them valuable economic aid, or China, with whom they had shared a close relationship for centuries. Charles Armstrong notes that instead of choosing one side, the DPRK chose both sides. North Korea first signed a Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance with the USSR. A mere five days later, a similar treaty was signed with China. "These two alliance treaties reflected North Korea's masterful manipulation of Beijing and Moscow rather than trilateral cooperation" (Armstrong 124). By establishing alliances with both sides, North Korea was able to have its cake and eat it too – the DPRK could reap the benefits of an alliance with both the USSR and China simultaneously while never declaring loyalty to one over the other.

These treaties placed North Korea in a position of security in the face of a growing military in South Korea. The next step to ensure security was for the North to build up its own military. Armstrong states, "By the middle of the decade, *Juche* took on new meaning as a policy of military self-reliance, or as a DPRK slogan of the times put it, 'turning the whole country into an armed camp'" (129). The sudden military buildup reflected a sense of anxiety within the North's regime.

Armstrong lays out a number of issues that influenced the military buildup in North Korea:

In 1963, Park was elected president, which gave him at least the appearance of greater legitimacy than the head of an unelected junta, and the US president Kennedy renewed the American commitment to defense of the South. The ROK government was newly stable, firmly anticommunist, more formidable militarily than before, and even showed signs of economic growth after several years of stagnation. By contrast, North Korea's relations with the Soviet Union were openly tense, and its relations with China were less warm than they appeared. Foreign assistance was decreasing, and the domestic economy was slipping. (131)

Although the South did not overtake the North economically until the 1970s, the South's economy was at least stable and steadily growing by 1963 while the North's was, as Armstrong points out, "slipping" (131).³⁸ The stability in the South Korean economy was a result of that country's strengthening relationship with the US and Japan. I want to look more closely at these strengthening relationships and their influence on North Korean language policy. What was significant regarding the events of the 1960s in South Korea that might have caused Kim to make these pronouncements on language policy?

³⁸ North Korea, at the time of the division and throughout the 1950s, was economically much stronger than South Korea. The North was historically more industrial whereas the South was more agricultural. As hard as it may be to believe looking at the two countries today, there was a time when the South actually relied on the North for certain products. As Cumings points out, during the occupation period, the Japanese had built chemical plants in the North. Consequently, the South depended on the North for essential fertilizers in the 1950s (324). At the beginning of the 1960s the situation was not much different. According to Cumings "North Korea's industrial economy had overcome the wartime destruction and was steaming far ahead of the South" (351-352). The industry developed in the North during the Japanese occupation allowed the North to maintain an economically superior position over the South for many years. The North was confident that it could maintain this position and created economic development plans to ensure its continued industrial success (see Bruce Cumings 434 for more information). The North's economic prosperity was slowed significantly when the Soviet Union ceased aiding the country. In the meantime, the South's economy was improving.

South Korea's rapid development that began in the 1960s and eventually pushed its economy ahead of the North's in the 1970s was preceded by economic aid to South Korea.³⁹ This aid was the highest in the 1950s but still continued throughout the 1960s.

Tae-Gyun Park explains the US's motives for continuing aid to South Korea,

the improvement of economic conditions in North Korea was one of the factors highlighting the need for economic growth in South Korea. North Korea achieved a remarkable economic recovery and growth in the 1950s, and the United States continued to monitor its development...Because the Korean peninsula remained divided, and each side maintained a system very different from the other, American policy makers regarded South Korea in particular as 'a display window of democracy.' (102)

The US felt the imperative to help South Korea become a beacon of democracy amidst its communist neighbors. Although the South did not become the clear economic leader on the peninsula until the 1970s, it was clearly an achievement that the US had envisioned since the establishment of North and South Korea in 1945.

US aid to South Korea in the 1960s was divided into two plans, "The First Five-Year Plan (1962-1966) and the Second Five-Year Plan (1967-1971) of Economic Development" (Kihl 50), and successfully implemented. "The key points of the new proposals were to reduce military grants, to reduce the size of the South Korean army, and to increase economic development aid" (Park 106). Until this time, US aid to South

³⁹ In comparison to other Asian countries after 1960-62, "acceleration was greatest in (South) Korea" (Chang, 1980, 18). South Korea's rapid development during the 1960s is referred to as "decade of development" and later became a model throughout the world. It was unimaginable that a country like South Korea could develop at such a rate. Park Chung-hee was at the helm as the South's president during the "decade of development" and despite his many shortcomings, many Koreans credit him for South Korea's economic success. Park was probusiness and under his leadership, from 1961-1979, the "Korean model of development had its heyday" (Cumings 1997, 79). This is exemplified by Hyundai, the Korean *chaebol*, and its major success in the 1960s.

Korea was primarily focused on military support. As previously stated, it was crucial to the US that South Korea be an example of democracy and its benefits to the rest of the world. Therefore, not surprisingly, the US decided, “Korean plans should be the focus of American influence, and the basic determinant of the U.S. aid program” (106).

In addition to the two five-year economic plans, South Korea received additional military aid from the US for its involvement in Vietnam. In *Korea's Place in the Sun*, Bruce Cumings cites Macdonald and Woo in explaining the financial reward that the South received from the US for its participation in the war.

The operative document was the so-called Brown memorandum of March 4, 1966, under which about \$1 billion in American payments went to Korea in the period 1965-70.⁴⁰ Scholars estimated that this arrangement annually accounted for between 7 and 8 percent of Korea's GDP in the period 1966-69 and for as much as nearly 19 percent of its total foreign earnings. (321)

The US was eager not only for South Korea to be an example of economic success in the region but also to join it in the fight against the spread of communism throughout the world. By his second speech to linguists on May 14, 1966, Kim Il Sung was likely aware of the Brown memorandum of March 4, 1966, and undoubtedly aware of the South's participation in Vietnam and its joint resolve with the US to destroy communism.

Although reunification was still a popular topic in this period, Kihl points out, “No headway in nation building was made, however, during the 1954-1970 years. The policy toward reunification in this period was largely a matter of rhetoric and empty gesture, expressing a pietistic attitude toward the sacred national task” (50). While

⁴⁰ Payments seem to have preceded the official establishment of the memorandum.

reunification discussions seemed to take the back seat, the South's economy grew and its ties with the United States continued to be strong.

North Korea was undoubtedly aware of America's support of the South and the South's acceptance of their support. In the midst of the first phase of economic development aid from the US to South Korea, "the First Five-Year Plan" (1962-1966), Kim Il Sung gave his 1964 language policy speech to linguists. To illustrate the necessity to coin new words as well as replace Chinese ideographs simultaneously, Kim Il Sung said "If you write *sangjon* ["mulberry field"], the young people may confuse it with the word *sangjon* ["master"] which you use when you condemn the puppets for licking the boots of their Yankee masters" ("Some Problems" 6).⁴¹ The North, or at least Kim Il Sung, viewed the South as a puppet regime controlled by the Yankees. This expression exemplifies Kim's discontent with the South's continued relationship with and dependence on the US. The South's relationships with the North's enemies, the US and Japan, were not only a betrayal but were counter to the *juche* ideology, which was in full swing in North Korea.

Then there was the matter of North Korea's other archrival, Japan, and its relationship to South Korea. The United States was in favor of reconnecting South Korea and Japan, something the North would have vehemently opposed. Cumings explains, "From 1947 onward, as we have seen, a cardinal element of U.S. foreign policy was to bring Japanese economic influence back into Korea" (318). The US, therefore, largely

⁴¹ "<<상전>>이라고 쓰면 아마 젊은 사람들은 괴뢰들이 미국놈을 자기들의 주인으로 모신다고 욕할 때 쓰는 <<상전>>과 헛갈릴수 있습니다" (Kim "Chosŏnrŭl palchŏnsik'iki" 250).

coordinated the normalization between the two nations. This fact only fueled the rhetoric in the North regarding South Korea as a puppet nation.⁴²

South Korea's normalization with Japan was a monumental event given the history of Japan and the Korean peninsula. The Japanese occupation of Korea was a period still fresh in the minds of the older generation and many Koreans of the younger generation were also up in arms over the potential normalization with the former colonizers.⁴³ Although normalization was unwelcomed by many Koreans, it cannot be argued that Korea did not benefit economically from the controversial policy. "In the normalization the ROK received from Japan, a direct grant of \$300 million and loans of \$200 million in 1965 dollars, and private firms put in another \$300 million in investment" (Cumings 321). The South Korean regime's newfound political ties with Japan fueled North Korea's hatred for its southern neighbor as well as for the US, which was believed, even by many South Koreans, to have coordinated the normalization policy out of favoritism for Japan rather than for South Korea (Mobius 246).

It was the Japanese that had carried out countless atrocities on the Korean

⁴² Even among South Koreans, there were those who were skeptical of the US's involvement in the normalization process. As the US was putting pressure on South Korea to normalize relations with Japan, suspicion arose regarding the US's loyalty to the South. Many South Koreans believed that the US actually favored Japan and the normalization treaty would serve Japan's interest by allowing it to further strengthen its position as a leader in the region (Mobius 244-246).

⁴³ The spring of 1964 saw large student demonstrations protesting the reinstatement of martial law (Cumings 360). "The normalization of Korean relations with Japan, which did so much for the Korean economy was thus accomplished only after massive demonstrations and political disorders lasting several years. In August 1965 the ruling party voted 110 to nothing to ratify the treaty, the opposition members having boycotted the National Assembly" (Macdonald qtd. in Cumings 360).

peninsula with the goal of assimilating Koreans to the Japanese way of life. Not the least of which was linguistic imperialism. “Before liberation, the Japanese imperialists tried to stamp out our language and letters. Proclaiming Japanese the ‘national language,’ they prohibited the use of Korean and forced us to use Japanese” (Kim “Some Problems” 2).⁴⁴ Given this statement by Kim in 1964, South Korea’s normalization with Japan in 1965 was likely seen by the North as a betrayal, and particularly a betrayal of Kim Il Sung, whose persona was based in part on his claim to have been a guerilla fighter and activist during the Japanese occupation. Indeed, Kim’s 1966 speech suggests a stronger stance against Japanese loanwords than his 1964 speech. In 1964, with reference to Japanese apple names, Kim states, “If a species is from Japan, it should be given a Japanese name, but if it is from our own country, it should have a Korean name” (Kim “Some Problems” 9).⁴⁵ His tone is noticeably different in 1966 when addressing the presence of Japanese loanwords in Korean, “Some comrades now say that because the present names of apples, rice and the like have become familiar to us, it will be difficult to change them. But we must change them boldly without hesitation” (Kim “On Correctly Preserving” 286).⁴⁶ In his 1966 speech, Kim seems to allow no exception to eliminating Japanese loanwords.

⁴⁴ “해방전에 일본제국주의자들은 우리 말과 글을 없애려고 하였습니다. 그들은 일본말을 <<국어>>라고 하면서 조선말을 못쓰게 하고 일본말을 쓰게 하였습니다” (Kim “Chosŏnrŭl palchŏnsik’iki” 248).

⁴⁵ “만일 그 종자가 일본것이라면 일본이름을 붙일것이고 우리 나라것이라면 우리 이름을 붙여야 할것입니다” (Kim “Chosŏnrŭl palchŏnsik’iki” 251).

⁴⁶ “지금 어떤 동부들은 사과나 벼 같은것은 이때까지 부른던 이름에 버릇되었기때문에 그것은 다근 이름으로 고치기 힘들다고 하는데 주저하지 말고 대담하게 고쳐야 합니다” (Kim “Chosŏnrŭi minjokchŏk” 258).

This change reflects Kim Il Sung's demonstration of commitment to Korean culture and the Korean language directly following South Korea's normalization with Japan.

South Korea in the early 1960s began to look outward. At the same time, in the Northern half of the peninsula, Kim Il Sung was focused on his self-reliant ideology, *juche*. The language policies put forth by the "The Great Leader", particularly the purification policy, with its goal of purifying the Korean language of outside influence, reflect North Korea's ever-increasing resolve to be an independent state governed by *juche* and untarnished by the Yankees or those who agree with their corrupt ways, specifically South Korea and Japan.

South Korea's relationships with the US and Japan, two rich and powerful nations, showed no signs of weakening as evidenced by the aid packages. The US's continued aid and other events leading up to the early 1960s in South Korea – Park's election, US president Kennedy's renewed commitment to defend South Korea, the ROK's political stability and signs of economic growth – occurred when the North's foreign aid was decreasing and its economy was suffering (Armstrong 131). In Armstrong's words, "North Korea was ahead of the South only in terms of its political stability, or rather the near-absolute control of Kim Il Sung and his partisan group" (Armstrong 131). The North's only clear advantages over the South had been reduced to its political stability.

In the face of this reality, and in the spirit of *juche*, Kim Il Sung developed a new strategy in his competition with South Korea. Kim Il Sung could quite easily make a case that the South, through its nonadherence to *juche* ideology – strengthening relations with a former colonizer and the Yankees – was losing its culture, language, and overall

Korean-ness. It was the perfect time for Kim Il Sung to establish cultural dominance over South Korea through officially establishing his language policy. Through proposing language policies based on *juche* in the form of linguistic purity, Kim Il Sung could prove that North Korea was indeed a nation so culturally strong that not even its language was affected by outside influence. Kim was less concerned with the language purification policy's linguistic function than with its nationalistic function of rallying the people around a sense of linguistic purity and cultural superiority over South Korea.

LANGUAGE POLICY AS A PERFORMANCE OF CULTURAL SUPERIORITY

Kim Il Sung's speeches on language policy were more a performance with the aim of proving cultural superiority over the South than a long-term plan to purify the Korean language. It is hard to believe that any of the Korean linguists in Kim Il Sung's audience sincerely believed that the proposed language policies would be successful. The purification policy of eliminating loanwords, particularly Chinese loanwords – 50% of the Korean language - was illogical. If successful, the “pure” Korean would look more like a different language than a purified form of Korean.

North Korea's language policies did not achieve the success that Kim Il Sung had envisioned in his speeches. The policy regarding the elimination of Chinese place names was clearly unsuccessful as North Korea maintains many Chinese place names today. The other policy that came up short was the one that Kim Il Sung most emphatically stressed: the purification policy.

Lexical purism, which was initiated in earnest after Kim Il Sung's two speeches in 1964 and 1966, produced a series of collections of revised words in 1977, 1978, 1982 and finally in 1986. What was noticeable in the final collection of revised words was that almost half of revised words, which had reached 50,000 by 1986, was removed (Choy qtd. in Moon 104). Some Sino-Korean and other loanwords, which had been replaced with native words or had been revised into nativised words, were reinstated. Both revised and original words were recognized in some cases, while some revised words were further modified. (p.104)

In other words, half of the Sino-Korean words that had been revised since Kim Il Sung's speeches were removed from the language between the 1982 and 1986 publications of

collections of revised words.

Not only had 25,000 revised words been removed from the list of 50,000 but also Sino-Korean words that had been thrown out under Kim Il Sung were being reinstated. In justification of this policy amendment, Kim Jong Il, the second leader of the DPRK said, “there are no small number of ambiguous and awkward native circumlocutions as a result of unnecessary replacement of nativised Sino-Korean words” (Choy qtd. in Moon 104). The impracticality of this aspect of Kim Il Sung’s purification policy proved to be problematic to the point that even his son and successor would openly acknowledge it and take actions to resolve it. The process of eliminating the coined words continued and by 1992 only 12,000 of the 50,000 coined words remained.

As Sim Pyeng-Ho points out, “This adjustment of lexical purism shows that many of the revised words had not been well accepted by the public, that it was much more difficult to change people’s linguistic habits than it was to revise words” (qtd. in Moon 105). Considering this reality, it is no real surprise that Kim Il Sung’s purification policy was drastically modified, if not reversed, by Kim Jong Il. However, the second leader of North Korea was by no means against language planning. Under Kim Jong Il, “the relationship between language and nation is more strongly emphasized as the single most important symbol of the nation than before” (Moon 103). *Juche*, or self reliance, continued to govern the language planning process under Kim Jong Il, although the policy of purification was drastically scaled back.

Given the fact that his son took actions to modify Kim Il Sung’s language policy of purification, questions regarding the functions of the language policies arise. If the policies were truly rooted in the goals of development and purification, they would have

been more linguistically sound from the beginning and would not have been drastically altered 20 years after implementation. Although the policies may have had true linguistic functions, it is important, particularly in North Korea, to consider the performance aspect of Kim Il Sung's speeches on language policy.

Kim Il Sung's speeches were not based on logic; rather, he strives to appeal to the emotions of his audience. In his 1964 speech, for example, Kim states:

Our language is so rich that it is capable of expressing any complex thought or delicate feeling well, can stir people, make them laugh or cry. Our language is also effective in educating people in communist morality, because it can express matters of courtesy with precision. Our national language is so rich in pronunciation that in it we can pronounce almost freely the sounds of any other language of the Eastern or Western countries. (Kim "Some Problems" 5)⁴⁷

Kim Il Sung's description of Korean, other than the last sentence, is basically an accurate description of any fully developed language. However, this description is meant to inspire pride in the Korean language specifically.

Kim Il Sung also employs this strategy of stirring emotions when he rehashes the emotions connected to the Japanese colonization period, a time during which Koreans believe their language was suppressed. He also continually criticizes the South for allowing English to infiltrate Korean. He attempts to inspire a sense of worry that Korean is on its way out when he says, "if we take no action our language will really die

⁴⁷ "우리 말은 표현이 풍부하여 복잡한 사상과 섬세한 감정을 다 잘 나타낼수 있으며 사람들을 격동시킬수 있고 울릴수도 있으며 웃길수도 있습니다. 우리 말은 레의법절을 똑똑히 나타낼수 있기때문에 사람들의 공산주의도덕교양에도 매우 좋습니다. 또 한 우리 나라 말음이 매우 풍부합니다. 그렇기때문에 우리 말과 글로써는 동서양의 어떤 나라 말의 발음이든지 거의 마음대로 나타낼수 있습니다" (Kim "Chosŏnŏrŭl palchŏnsik'iki" 249-250).

out” (Kim “On Correctly Preserving” 286).⁴⁸ By appealing to emotions, Kim Il Sung was successful in garnering the support of his audience of linguists. The support was also likely given out of fear, considering Kim’s record of purging those who challenged his policies.

Through his criticism of the South for being a puppet of the United States, he attempted to appeal to a sense of pride: pride in North Korea’s holding to Korean culture and the Korean language while the South was becoming ever-more westernized by the Yankees. In his speeches to North Korean linguists, for example, Kim Il Sung exaggerated the linguistic situation in South Korea. Since the American military had a presence in South Korea, Kim Il Sung promoted the idea that English was corrupting the Korean in the South. This propaganda was only strengthened by the fact that General MacArthur had established English as the military’s official language: “in the event of any ambiguity or diversity of interpretation or definition between any English and Korean or Japanese text, the English text shall prevail” (General Douglas MacArthur’s first official communiqué, Proclamation No. 1, qtd. in King 112-113). This temporary policy lasted throughout the US military ruling of South Korea from 1945 to 1948. King stated, “Thus, technically speaking, English became the official language for a time, and this particular policy would feed into later North Korean attempts to build a myth of ‘American imperialist policy to obliterate the Korean language’ in South Korea” (113). However, the policy was clearly not one established with the goal of assimilating Koreans to American culture by “obliterating” the Korean language. Rather, it was

⁴⁸ “가만히 있으면 우리 말은 정말 없어지고말것입니다” (Kim “Chosŏnŏi minjokchŏk” 258).

established because American soldiers neither spoke nor understood Korean.⁴⁹ As is the case today, it is safe to assume that at that time in history, there were more Koreans who spoke English than Americans who spoke Korean.

In 1981, in the third issue of the journal *Cultured Language Learning*, in the article “After the Three Kingdoms Period, the Koguryo Language Played a Leading Role in the Development of Our Language” Kim Il Sung harped on the Japanese occupation and the threat that the Japanese placed on the Korean language. In the fourth issue, Kim Il Sung implored the North Korean readers to “extend the struggle against the policy of national-language linguicide of American imperialism” (qtd. in King 131). In *Cultured Language Learning*, a linguistic journal in North Korea, Kim Il Sung went so far as to say, “Through the policy of extermination of the Korean language of the American imperialists, our language [the Korean language] is gradually losing its purity and turning into a gibberish mixture” (qtd. in King 133). It is unknown exactly how effective Kim Il Sung’s unfounded criticism of South Korea’s language situation was in building cultural nationalism in the North. However, it is clear that Kim Il Sung believed it was necessary to continually spread this propaganda.

It is evident that Kim Il Sung’s declaration of a language purification policy was a method of proving to his people and South Korea that the North was stronger and more committed to their primordial ideals than South Korea. Kim Il Sung’s tone suggests that linguistic purity and cultural purity is the most important aspect of being a nation. He paints a picture of the South as a country that is no longer Korean. In a society where

⁴⁹ It can also be argued that that the policy acted as a form of neocolonialism by the US over South Korea.

bloodline and identity is highly valued and considered, Kim Il Sung's descriptions of the South are not light insults.

Kim Il Sung also declared that the Korean used in the North was purer and stronger than the Korean used in the South because the Korean language originated in North Korea.

North Korea has attempted to elaborate a myth of primordial northern primacy in the prehistory of the language. The stress on the Koguryo language as the root of ancient Korean has been part of a larger North Korean myth that arose in reaction to the South Korean myth of an Altaic heritage for Korean. This latter myth was attributed by the North to a U.S. reactionary conspiracy to persuade South Koreans that their language was somehow derived, second-rate, and not autochthonous and hence fit for outside control. (King 131)

Kim Il Sung was essentially declaring that the South never had primordial claims to the language in the first place. According to Kim, it was the lack of primordial linguistic roots that allowed the South to be culturally overtaken by the outside world. This primordialist propaganda was Kim Il Sung's method of inspiring cultural pride and nationalism and claiming cultural superiority on the peninsula.

Kim Il Sung supported the North's primordialist claims to the Korean language by referencing the victimization of the Korean language during the Japanese occupation. Considering the charged emotions on both sides of the peninsula relating to the Japanese linguistic assimilation efforts during the occupation period, the North's claim that the South allowed the Korean language to become corrupted and once again subject to destruction was an insult to the core. It marked the South as a cultural traitor to the Korean identity.

The language policies of Kim Il Sung in 1960s North Korea were, unsurprisingly, unsustainable and therefore modified in the 1980s by Kim Jong Il. However, the

successful purification of Korean in the North was never the true goal. This policy created by Kim Il Sung was merely a weapon of nationalist propaganda against South Korea. The economic aid from the US in the 1950s and 1960s and the normalized relations with Japan in 1965 symbolized South Korea's alliance and continuing friendship with two of the richest countries in the world and North Korea's enemies: US and Japan. The North's response was a personal attack aimed at something that both sides of the peninsula had fought to preserve during the Japanese occupation of 1910-1945: the Korean language. According to Kim Il Sung, this preservation effort had been discarded in the South. The North's propaganda machine produced an image of the South Korean language as littered with Chinese, Japanese, and, worst of all, English. According to this propaganda, although the South was benefiting lavishly from its relationship with the US and Japan, their language, and thus their cultural identity, was falling apart. The North propagated this idea and supported it through language policies. These policies furthered the ideology of *juche* and nationalism in the North by purporting that their language was on a path to purity while the language in South Korea was an ever-corrupt polyglot language destined for cultural destruction. Promoting this idea of linguistic purity was a means by which Kim Il Sung could establish cultural superiority over South Korea at a time when that country's relationship with the US and Japan showed no signs of weakening.

CONCLUSION

The periods of suppression of the Korean language during the Japanese occupation, from 1910 to 1945, inspired a drive to protect the language on the peninsula. The Japanese colonizers suppressed the Korean language to various degrees throughout their 35-year rule. Japanese language education in schools became a strong focus of the assimilation effort toward the end of the colonization period. In the final years of the occupation, Korean language education was not permitted in schools. Korean media and entertainment was censored and, at times, banned entirely. On two separate occasions, the public usage of Korean was prohibited. The linguistic oppression extended even to names. Koreans were required to “Japanize” their names, further suppressing their Korean identity.

These events were still fresh in the minds of many North Koreans after liberation, at which time the North formed language policies to eradicate illiteracy and remove Chinese characters from the Korean script. These postliberation policies seemed to be formed and carried out by Kim Il Sung in conjunction with North Korean linguists. In 1964, in the spirit of *juche*, which had by this time taken full root in North Korea, Kim Il Sung took full control of linguistic issues and established his extreme language policy. Kim Il Sung’s language policy in the 1960s was a means by which Kim could carry the *juche* ideology to the people and unify them in a sense of cultural and linguistic purity and superiority over South Korea. The drive to protect Korean in the hearts of the people

allowed his extreme policies, created with the expressed goal of purifying and developing Korean, to be implemented vigorously until his son became the leader, at which point they were scaled back. Kim Il Sung played to his audience's emotions surrounding the need to protect Korean from becoming corrupt as, he purported, it had in the South. He presented his plans to purify the Korean language in his 1964 and 1966 speeches to North Korean linguists.

Kim Il Sung's first speech in 1964, "Some Problems Related to the Development of the Korean Language," served the purpose of introducing the language issues in question. Although letter reform, word spacing, and Korean language education were all briefly addressed, Kim Il Sung emphasized a purification policy calling for the replacement of all Chinese loanwords with pure Korean words. Kim Il Sung also used this opportunity to inspire a sense of pride in the language by praising Korean's ability to fully communicate expressions and ideas, characteristics of any fully developed language.

Kim Il Sung touched on many of the same policies in his 1966 speech to linguists, but more emphasis still was placed on the purification policy. In this speech, Kim Il Sung proposed his plans for implementing the extreme purification policy. The policy would be seen in nearly every facet of society: children would be educated on the newly coined and pure Korean words, textbooks with Chinese characters would be replaced, newspapers would carry new word lists, new dictionaries would be printed, and children would correct the older generation that would undoubtedly continue to use Chinese words out of habit.

In the early and mid 1960s, South Korea's interaction with the United States

continued to be strong and its relationship with Japan had normalized. Although aid from the US in the 1960s was generally lower than in the 1950s, the US seemed to increase its interaction with the South at this time to help it reach President Park's economic goals. The South's improving relationship with Japan is evidenced by the economic aid from Japan after the South normalized relations with the former colonizer.

Kim Il Sung would have viewed these relationships as a betrayal to the North and a desertion of Korean culture. The speeches in 1964 and 1966 reflected Kim Il Sung's increasing drive to be self-reliant in all areas to fully embrace *juche* ideology. Establishing his purification policy was Kim's method of implementing *juche* on a linguistic level to unite the people in cultural and linguistic purity and to assert North Korea's cultural superiority in reaction to the South's positive relationships with the US and Japan.

This argument that Kim Il Sung's speeches on language policy were more a performance of cultural superiority than a realistic plan to be implemented is furthered by the fact that Kim Jong Il, Kim Il Sung's son and successor, drastically altered the purification policy. Under his rule, of the 50,000 words that had been coined since the purification policy's establishment, only 12,000 remained by 1992. Kim Il Sung's language policy was perhaps never meant to succeed because its success in actual implementation was not the goal.

The goal was to further implement *juche* and, in so doing, establish cultural superiority over the South. Kim Il Sung's criticisms of the South's language situation are scattered throughout his speeches. Kim Il Sung labeled the South's language as a "polyglot" language that uses little more than loanwords from Chinese, Japanese, and

English. These criticisms of the South coupled with Kim Il Sung's remarks regarding the Japanese colonizers' suppression of Korean were meant to rekindle the drive to protect the Korean language and to keep it from deteriorating, as he claims that it had in the South. Yet, as this paper shows, the implementation of the policy proved to be impractical and the policy functioned, instead, as a means for the North to appear culturally superior to the cultural traitors in the South.

This analysis of North Korea's language policy fits into a larger narrative of how to effectively understand North Korea. In analyzing Kim Il Sung's language policy in isolation, it is natural to arrive at the commonly held conclusion that much of what is done in North Korea is strange and irrational. However, when Kim Il Sung's language policy is analyzed in the context of *juche* and competition with South Korea, we begin to more fully understand the reasons for the speeches and the implausible purification policy.

In analyzing North Korea, it is important to remember that actions in the North, though they may appear insensible, have reasons. As I mentioned in the introduction of this paper, events in North Korea are often reactions to situations in the South. The North has been in competition with the South since the division of the peninsula, and I believe that analyzing the North with this perspective can be useful not only in the analysis of Kim Il Sung's language policy but also in other areas.

Future Research

As is the case with research related to North Korea, information is limited and any articles or documents that can be obtained from the country come with questionable integrity. It is hard to trust anything that has gone through the North Korean filters

before being published for the world. I believe further research on North Korean language policy would benefit from interviewing North Korean refugees who were living in North Korea during the 1960s and 1970s, when the purification policy was in full effect. Through interviewing North Korean refugees, the extent to which the purification policy was implemented in schools, textbooks, newspapers, and other areas of society would become clearer.

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